POL 14 VIET S
(1403)

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ACTION EA-11

INFO OCT-01 SS-20 NSC-10 NSCE-00 INR-07 CIAE-00 NSAE-00
PM-03 DODE-00 RSR-01 RSC-01 /054 W
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R 291225Z AUG 70
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5237
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
USDEL FRANCE
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
CINCPAC
AMCONSUL DANANG

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Joan Goodberg DATE 1/22/82
RDS ☐ or XDS ☐ EXT. DATE
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DECLASSIFIED ☑ RELEASABLE ☑
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PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 14093

LIMDIS

SUBJECT: UPPER-HOUSE ELECTION.

REF : A. SAIGON 11518 - POL 14 VIET S
B. SAIGON 11247

1. ON EVE OF UPPER HOUSE ELECTION, CONSENSUS OF POLITICAL OBSERVERS IN ALL MRS IS THAT LISTS HEADED BY HUYNH VAN CAO, VU VAN MAU, TRUONG VINH LE AND NGUYEN VAN HUYEN ARE FRONT RUNNERS.

2. APPROXIMATELY 6.5 MILLION PERSONS ARE REGISTERED TO VOTE, AN INCREASE OF APPROXIMATELY 500,000 OVER JUNE PROVINCIAL AND MUNICIPAL COUNCIL ELECTION REGISTRATION. GVN THROUGH VIETNAMESE INFORMATION SERVICE (VIS) HAS CONDUCTED EXTENSIVE "GET OUT THE VOTE" CAMPAIGN IN ATTEMPT TO INCREASE VOTER TURNOUT. VOTER INTEREST SEEMS RELATIVELY LOW WITH EXCEPTION OF POLITICALLY SOPHISTICATED ELEMENTS. THIS IS UNDERSTANDABLE SINCE THIS IS THIRD ELECTION IN RECENT MONTHS AND SENATORS WITH THEIR NATIONAL DUTIES AND NATIONWIDE CONSTITUENCIES APPEAR SOMEWHAT REMOTE TO THE AVERAGE VIETNAMESE VOTER. MOREOVER, CAMPAIGNING HAS BEEN LACKLUSTER AND HAS NOT STRUCK POPULAR FANCY.

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3. MOST COMMON THEME IN CAMPAIGN LITERATURE HAS BEEN DESIRE FOR PEACE. NO SPECIFIC OR ORIGINAL PROPOSALS FOR OBTAINING IT HAVE BEEN SUGGESTED.

4. WITHIN LAST FEW DAYS, THERE HAVE BEEN REPORTS FROM VARIETY OF SOURCES (NEWSPAPERS, CANDIDATES AND POLITICIANS DIRECTLY CONCERNED WITH THE ELECTION, AND MIDDLE-LEVEL GVN OFFICIALS) THAT PROVINCE CHIEFS AND MILITARY COMMANDERS HAVE RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS, REPORTEDLY FROM THE HIGHEST GVN CIRCLES, TO SUPPORT SLATES OF CAO, LE AND MINISTER OF STATE NGUYEN TIEN HY.

5. HA THUC KY, CHAIRMAN OF THE REVOLUTIONARY DAI VIET PARTY (WHOSE PARTY ENTRY, NGUYEN VAN CANH, IS NOT GIVEN MUCH CHANCE OF VICTORY) TELLS US THAT HIS DEPUTY, SENATOR HOANG XUAN TUU, QUESTIONED PRESIDENT THIEU AGUUST 26 ABOUT THESE REPORTS. ACCORDING TO KY AND TUU, THIEU DENIED RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ACTION, BUT SAID HIS SPECIAL ASSISTANT FOR POLITICAL AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS, TRAN VAN AN, HAD ISSUED SUCH AN INSTRUCTION. KY SAID THAT TUU DID NOT GAIN IMPRESSION THAT THIEU INTENDED TO RESCIND THE INSTRUCTION.

6. TRAN VAN AN HIMSELF DENIES TO US THAT HE HAS PLAYED ANY SUCH ROLE. HE ASSERTS THAT NO INSTRUCTION TO SUPPORT SPECIFIC SLATES HAS GONE OUT OF PRESIDENCY TO HIS KNOWLEDGE, AND HE BELIEVES THAT HE WOULD HAVE KNOWN HAD THERE BEEN ANY. AN CLAIMS HIS ROLE WAS LIMITED TO TELLING PERSONAL FRIENDS THAT HE HIMSELF PLANNED TO VOTE FOR LISTS OF NGUYEN TIEN HY, NGUYEN ANH TUAN (BECAUSE OF PRESENCE ON IT OF AN'S FRIEND AND ASSISTANT, HISTORIAN NGUYEN PHUT TAN), AND NGUYEN NGOC HUY.

7. IN ADDITION TO DISCUSSING MATTER WITH AN, WE ASKED PRESIDENTIAL SECRETARY HOANG DUC NHA WHETHER THERE IS ANY PLAN TO ISSUE AN ELECTION-EVE STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT THIEU URGING FAIR ELECTIONS. NHA SAID THAT HE HAD RAISED IDEA WITH PRESIDENT, BUT AS OF COB AUGUST 29 NHA REPORTED HE DID NOT BELIEVE ONE WOULD BE MADE.

8. EVEN IF PALACE DID PASS WORD TO SUPPORT SPECIFIC SLATES, OR SOME OFFICIALS THINK IT DID, IMPACT WOULD BE LIMITED BY PERSONAL POLITICAL PREFERENCES OF MR COMMANDERS, PROVINCE CHIEFS AND OTHER LOCAL OFFICIALS, AND BY OTHER FACTORS THAT

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INFLUENCE THE ELECTORATE, PARTICULARLY THE ROLE OF RELIGIONS. (AN QUANG IS GENERALLY KNOWN TO BE FIRMLY SUPPORTING VU VAN MAU SLATE, WHILE CATHOLIC HIERARCHY IS BACKING CAO AND HUYEN SLATES LEAVING THIRD CHOICE TO INDIVIDUAL DISCRETION. HOA HAO ARE PREDICTABLY FRAGMENTED AND CAO DAI EVEN MORE SO.) FINALLY LEGAL SAFEGUARDS AND SUPERVISION OF ELECTION COMMISSION HEADED BY INCREASINGLY INDEPENDENT CHIEF JUSTICE OF SUPREME COURT, REPRESENT OBSTACLES TO LARGE SCALE MANIPULATION.

9. OUR ANALYSIS OF BASIC STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF INDIVIDUAL LISTS REMAINS THAT DESCRIBED IN SAIGON A-227.
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